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Tom Bartlett

Time, the deer, is in the wood: Chronotopic identities, trajectories of texts and community self-management

Abstract: This paper opens with a problematisation of the notion of *real-time* in discourse analysis – dissected, as it is, as if time unfolded in a linear and regular procession at the speed of speech. To illustrate this point, the author combines Hasan’s concept of “relevant context” with Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope to provide an analysis of Sorley MacLean’s poem *Hallaig*, with its deep-rootedness in space and its dissolution of time. The remainder of the paper is dedicated to following the poem’s metamorphoses and trajectory as it intertwines with Bartlett’s own life and family history, creating a layered simultaneity of meanings orienting to multiple semio-historic centres. In this way the author (*pers. comm.*) “sets out to illustrate in theory, text analysis and (self-)history the trajectories taken by texts as they cross through time and space; their interconnectedness with social systems at different scales; and the manner in which they are revoiced in order to enhance their legitimacy before the diverse audiences they encounter on their migratory paths.” In this process, Bartlett relates his own story to the socioeconomic concerns of the Hebridean island where his father was raised, and to dialogues between local communities and national and external policy-makers – so echoing Denzin’s (2014: vii) call to “develop a methodology that allows us examine how the private troubles of individuals are connected to public issues and to public responses to these troubles”. Bartlett presents his data through a range of legitimation strategies and voicing techniques, creating transgressive texts that question received notions of identity, authorship, legitimacy and authenticity in academia, the portals of power, and the routines of daily life. The current Abstract is one such example. As with the author’s closing caveat on the potential dangers of self-revelation, offered, no doubt, as a flimsy justification for the extensive focus in the paper on his own life as a chronotope, I leave it for the individual reader to decide if Bartlett’s approach is ultimately ludic or simply ludicrous.

Keywords: Chronotope, Scales Theory, Ethnography, Voice, Legitimacy, Barra, Hallaig

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Introduction: “Hallaig: The Trajectory of a Text” and/or “My Life as a Chronotope”

Memory attempts to be faithful to the past, while history aims to be truthful.

Achugar (2018: 299)

This paper has been thrown together¹ from old photographs, random reminiscences, stories from my father (Bartlett 1925-2012), songs and tunes, previous talks, and things I have picked up from academic articles. Some of these elements bear the traces of their provenance in previous performances, others appear to be original. Two central motifs run through the story: an account of a trajectory taken by Sorley MacLean’s poem *Hallaig* as it achieves voice in different forms and before different audiences; and a reflection of how the poem is caught up in a network of personal meanings for me as the current author in my position as subject.

This paper, then, is an act of DIY, of *bricolage*: a bit of a botch job, in which the borders have not been neatly trimmed between the subjective and the objective, between the authoritative and the speculative, between different modes of communication and the way they shape and legitimate our narratives as we attempt to share our lived intensity with strangers, to make the time and space of our different worlds coalesce.

Real time

In relation to time, Ruqaiya Hasan (2016), following Whorf, says that only the deictic centre of the here and now and a gradual sense of “latering” are real; all else is the work of language, which imagines and shares amongst speakers concepts such as past and future, recent and relevant, ongoing and perfected. In this way, different languages have been evolved, each according to their own logic, in order to make sense of the passing of time, of material permanence, change, completion and decay. These conceptualisations become embedded in language, over the *longue durée*, in the form of lexicogrammatical resources such as tense, aspect, deixis and *Aktionsart*. And in the crucible of the present these resources are combined in real time to negotiate the context of situation, the balancing of speaker against speaker, experience against experience, expectation against expectation.

But what do we mean by “real time”? *Pace* Hasan and Whorf, we have a problem if only the deictic centre is real, for the real time of the deictic centre is no more than the combination of a point in space and an instant in time: it has no dimensions and can only have meaning within imagined scales of time and space.

As applied linguists we use the term real time unproblematically to refer to the time it takes to produce the text we are analysing, conflating context and co-text as if time unfolded in a single dimension and at the rate of human speech. But if the negotiation of the context of situation includes a negotiation of experience and expectation, of competing semiotic histories and imagined futures, then what is semiotically real are the parameters, or dimensions, of time and space *made relevant*, as Hasan would say, by the speakers themselves through, and for the purposes of, their talk.

According to Halliday, such relevance relates to three types of meaning, which are simultaneously attended to in all acts of language: the ideational (through which we represent our experience of events); the interpersonal (through which we negotiate identities); and the textual (through which we organise the other two meanings into linguistic artefacts). At clause

¹ By me.

rank, Halliday (1978:113) talks of the textual metafunction as the enabling metafunction as it organises the experiential and interpersonal meaning into palatable chunks of language through thematic structure and prosody. At a larger scale, taking spatial and temporal deixis as textual anchors, this is also true: the construals of identity and experience that take place across stretches of language only take on their meaning through the invocation of what Bakhtin (1981) labels chronotopes, the various configurations of time and space which give each genre its particular narrative character or, in Hasan's (1996) terms, the "ways of saying: ways of meaning" that characterise, and differentiate between, social groups and shared activities.

The Raasay poet Sorley MacLean (Somhairle MacGill-Eain) wrote a poem about time and the sensing of permanence, change, completion and decay. It starts like this:

Hallaig

'Tha tìm, am fiadh, an coille Hallaig'

*Tha bùird is tàirnean air an uinneig
trom faca mi an Àird Iar
's tha mo ghaol aig Allt Hallaig
'na craoibh bheithe, 's bha i riamh*

*eadar an t-Inbhir 's Poll a' Bhainne,
thall 's a-bhos mu Bhaile Chùirn:
tha i 'na beithe, 'na calltainn,
'na caorann dhirich sheang ùir.*

*Ann an Sgreapadal mo chinnidh,
far robh Tarmad 's Eachann Mòr,
tha 'n nigheanan 's am mic 'nan coille
a' gabhail suas ri taobh an lòn.*

Beautiful, isn't it? It is, of course, in Scottish Gaelic, the natural carrier of MacLean's voice. MacLean comments on his use of Gaelic in his preface to *O Choille gu Bearradh* (MacGill-Eain 1989: xiv):

In 1931 or 1932, I forget which, I wrote a poem called 'the Heron': the English, of course, is only a translation. I thought it better than any of my English stuff, and because of that – but also for patriotic reasons – I stopped writing verse in English and destroyed all the English stuff I could lay hands on.

MacLean was not the only postcolonial poet taking such dramatic action. The Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who wrote his first works of fiction in English, switched to his native Gikuyu, not simply as an index of his identity – MacLean's patriotic reasons – but because he believed that "the English language could not do justice to Kenyan perceptions of the world" (Belsey 2002:10). In rejecting English as a language, Ngũgĩ did not limit himself to considerations of syntax and clause-rank semantics, but also rejected the novel as a western genre, the heir and transmitter of European worldviews, and drew instead on indigenous forms of narrative and drama. To be a legitimate speaker, you need a legitimate voice and a legitimate medium, not just a legitimate message.

Returning to MacLean, such a drastic move creates a problem for a poet offering a critique of Highland history and the sociopolitical conditions across Europe in the 1930s. At that time, there were roughly 136,000 monolingual or bilingual speakers of Gaelic, representing 3% of

the population of Scotland, most of whom would have been illiterate in their mother tongue. In what way can a message be legitimate without an audience?

To resolve this problem, MacLean, following on from the translations of his work by fellow poet Iain Crichton Smith, chose to write in Gaelic, but to translate his work into English for a wider audience. This is MacLean's translation of MacLean:

Hallaig

'Tha tim, am fiadh, an coille Hallaig'

*Tha bùird is tàirnean air an uinneig
trom faca mi an Àird Iar
's tha mo ghaol aig Allt Hallaig
'na craoibh bheithe, 's bha i riamh*

*eadar an t-Inbhir 's Poll a' Bhainne,
thall 's a-bhos mu Bhaile Chùirn:
tha i 'na beithe, 'na calltainn,
'na caorann dhìrich sheang ùir.*

*Ann an Sgreapadal mo chinnidh,
far robh Tarmad 's Eachann Mòr,
tha 'n nigheanan 's am mic 'nan coille
a' gabhail suas ri taobh an lòin.*

*Uaibhreach a-nochd na coilich ghiuthais
a' gairm air mullach Cnoc an Rà,
dìreach an druim ris a' ghealaich –
chan iadsan coille mo ghràidh.*

*Fuirichidh mi ris a' bheithe
gus an tig i mach an Càrn,
gus am bi am bearradh uile
o Bheinn na Lice fa sgàil.*

*Mura tig 's ann theàrnas mi a Hallaig
a dh'ionnsaigh Sàbaid nam marbh,
far a bheil an sluagh a' tathaich,
gach aon ghinealach a dh'fhalbh.*

*Tha iad fhathast ann a Hallaig,
Clann Ghill-Eain 's Clann MhicLeòid,
na bh' ann ri linn Mhic Ghille Chaluim:
chunnacas na mairbh beò.*

*Na fìr 'nan laighe air an lèanaig
aig ceann gach taighe a bh' ann,
na h-igheanan 'nan coille bheithe,
dìreach an druim, crom an ceann.*

*Eadar an Leac is na Feàrnaibh
tha 'n rathad mòr fo chòinnich chiùin,
's na h-igheanan 'nam badan sàmhach
a' dol a Clachan mar o thus.*

*Agus a' tilleadh às a' Chlachan,
à Suidhisnis 's à tìr nam beò;
a chuile tè òg uallach
gun bhristeadh cridhe an sgeòil.*

"Time, the deer, is in the wood of Hallaig"

*The window is nailed and boarded
through which I saw the west
and my love is at the Burn of Hallaig
a birch tree, and she has always been*

*between Inver and Milk Hollow,
here and there about Baile-chuirn:
she's a birch, a hazel,
a straight slender young rowan.*

*In Screapadal of my people
where Norman and Big Hector were,
their daughters and their sons are a wood
going up beside the stream.*

*Proud tonight the pine cocks
crowning on the top of Cnoc an Rà,
straight their backs in the moonlight –
they are not the wood I love.*

*I will wait for the birch wood
until it comes up by the cairn,
until the whole ridge from Beinn na Lice
will be under its shade.*

*If it does not, I will go down to Hallaig,
to the Sabbath of the dead,
where the people are frequenting,
every single generation gone.*

*They are still in Hallaig,
MacLeans and MacLeods,
all who were there in the time of Mac Gille Chaluim:
the dead have been seen alive.*

*The men lying on the green
at the end of every house that was,
the girls a wood of birches,
straight their backs, bent their heads.*

*Between the Leac and Fearnas
the road is under mild moss
and the girls in silent bands
go to Clachan as in the beginning,*

*and return from Clachan,
from Suisnish and the land of the living;
each one young and light-stepping,
without the heartbreak of the tale.*

<p><i>O Allt na Feàrnaibh gus an fhaoilinn tha soilleir an dìomhaireachd nam bean chan eil ach coitheanal nan nighean there is only a' cumail na coiseachd gun cheann.</i></p> <p><i>A' tilleadh a Hallaig anns an fheasgar, anns a' chamhanaich bhalbh bheò, a' lionadh nan leathadan casa, an gàireachdaich 'nam chluais 'na ceò,</i></p> <p><i>'s am bòidhche 'na sgleò air mo chridhe mun tìg an ciaradh air caoil, 's nuair theàrnas grian air cùl Dhùn Cana thig peilear dian à gunna Ghaoil;</i></p> <p><i>'s buailear am fiadh a tha 'na thuaineal a' snòtach nan làraichean feòir; thig reothadh air a shùil sa choille: chan fhaighear lorg air fhuil rim bheò.</i></p>	<p><i>From the Burn of Fearn to the raised beach that is clear in the mystery of the hills, the congregation of the girls keeping up the endless walk,</i></p> <p><i>coming back to Hallaig in the evening, in the dumb living twilight, filling the steep slopes, their laughter a mist in my ears,</i></p> <p><i>and their beauty a film on my heart before the dimness comes on the kyles, and when the sun goes down behind Dun Cana a vehement bullet will come from the gun of Love;</i></p> <p><i>and will strike the deer that goes dizzily, sniffing at the grass-grown ruined homes; his eye will freeze in the wood, his blood will not be traced while I live².</i></p>
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You should stop at this point and listen to a fusion version of this poem performed by the late and very great Martyn Bennett at <https://vimeo.com/25562404> (last accessed 8/3/19).

With this translation non-Gaelic speakers reach a certain level of understanding as we can comprehend the words and, not without effort, the message they carry (with apologies to hardline poststructuralists):

The boarded window to the west signifies the closure of the Gaelic world into which MacLean was born, the despoilment of the village that gives the poem its name, and the encroachment of an alien culture symbolised as unloved pine plantations on the hill. Time the deer is indeed in the wood of Hallaig. But as we have suggested, linear time is an imaginary, and for MacLean it is an imaginary that can be slain by a vehement bullet from the gun of love. The young girls of the past, the native birches and the rowans, still populate the despoiled clachan, and in a perpetual deictic present of the Sabbath of the Dead every generation past is seen and walks amongst the stones and trees. (Bartlett, this issue)

While the lexicogrammatical resources of each language provide the preshaped tools to carve up time and space as we move from the deictic here and now, we use grammar to transcend its own limitations, to create distinctive spatiotemporal configurations as the relevant framework of understanding for our words and worlds. This is Bakhtin's (1981) notion of the chronotope.

John MacInnes (2010: 419) of the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh, whom I knew from Sandy Bell's, a bar in that reekie city, says this of *Hallaig*:

... the landscape is a Gaelic landscape. A feeling for landscape, for nature in general, is very old in Gaelic poetry, stretching back beyond the Scottish vernacular to the Scoto-Irish literary traditions of the early Middle Ages. In one of the Scottish developments, landscape, delineated through its place names, and community, delineated through the personal names of its heroes, are both celebrated in one complex whole.

² All extracts from MacLean's work are reprinted with kind permission of the author's estate and Carcanet Press.

However, we see that this might be a more universal feeling for landscape than MacInnes suggests. The following quote is from a definition of the chronotope that itself echoes the poetic imagination of *Hallaig* but which is quoted in reference to the geographic features in the Western Apache landscape seen as:

...points in the geography of a community where time and space intersect and fuse. Time takes on flesh and becomes visible for human contemplation; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time and history and the enduring character of a people... Chronotopes thus stand as monuments to the community itself, as symbols of it, as forces operating to shape its members' images of themselves. (Bakhtin 1981: 7 recontextualised in Basso 1996: 62)

In *Hallaig* MacLean transcends time with his perpetual Sabbath of the Dead³, and through his use of English transcends the limits of his Gaelophone audience. However, while his Anglophone readers and hearers can empathise with his message, a level of understanding beyond simple comprehension, the poem remains intensely local in scope and significance. The distinctive voice of MacLean indexes a chronotope deep in time but restricted in space. This is a chronotope which MacLean legitimately inhabits: a legitimacy overtly indexed through the phrase “Sgreapadal mo chinnidh/Screapadal of my people”, and for which he initially renounced the use of English.

But MacLean's concerns ran far deeper than Raasay and the Clearances and this presents a challenge: to extend the scope of his poetry while retaining his true voice (what is a message without a legitimate speaker, after all?).

MacLean's resolution to this conundrum comes in two forms. The first and simpler solution is to trouble the lyric poetry of his *Dàin do Eimhir* with references to the suffering of Europe in the 1930s:

Gaoir na h-Eòrpa

*A nighean a' chùil bhuidhe, throm-bhuidh òr-bhuidh
fonn do bheòil-sa 's gaoir na h-Eòrpa
A nighean gheal chasurlach aighearach bhòidheach
cha bhiodh masladh ar latha-ne searbh 'nad phòig-sa.*

The Cry of Europe

*Girl of the yellow, heavy-yellow, gold-yellow hair
the song of your mouth and Europe's shivering cry,
fair, heavy-haired, spirited beautiful girl,
the disgrace of our day would not be bitter in your kiss.*

In terms of Appraisal theory (Martin and White 2005), we have multiple tokens of positive appreciation for the beauty of the poet's human and local love written over with tokens of negative affect, propriety and impact for the translocal sociopolitical situation. In this poem, as with *Hallaig*, it is love and the local that triumph through the transcendent moment of the kiss. But the broader context is now no longer local as the old romantic cliché “you take away all my cares” is raised to a new level, with the cares of the poet becoming the cares of Europe. Can we perhaps also detect a sense of shame in the poet's voice, a feeling of guilt that the immediate and tangible pleasures of his local love can make him insensitive to the wider problems of the day?

The second means by which MacLean extends the scope of his poetry is to interpret the sufferings of Europe through the landscape of the Highlands and, in particular, the iconic Cuillin mountain range on Skye. In the following poem, we have the ragged topology of the mountains, with their positive complexity and evoked satisfaction, reimagined through a

³ On which the Dead arise and are seen by many (Matthew 27:52).

metaphoric transposition into the negative complexity of 1930s Europe and the inscriptions and evocations of negative affect that accompany this:

A'Bheinn air Chall

*Tha bheinn ag éirigh os cion na coille
air chall anns a'choille a th'air chall
is bhristeadh sinn air clàr na gréine
on a tha na speuran teann.*

*Air chall ann an aomadh na coille
Iomhaighean iomadhathach ar spéis
a chionn 'snach téid na sràidean ciùrrte
's a'choille mhaoth an cochur réidh.*

*A chionn 's gu bheil Vietnam 's Uladh
'nan torran air Auschwitz nan cnàmh
agus na craobhan saoi bhir ùrar
'nam prineachan air beanntan cràidh.*

Here we see how MacLean transcends space and time through his use of topology, not only as a symbol of war-torn Europe, but also as a trope of the shared history of the oppressed and marginalised.

So, we have reached a third level of understanding: the assimilation of ideas, as MacLean's poetics transcends space and time without loss of authenticity.

The Lost Mountain

*The mountain rises above the wood
lost in the wood that is lost,
and we have been broken on the board of our own sun
since the skies are tight.*

*Lost in the decline of the wood
the many-coloured images of our aspiration
since the tortured streets will not go
In the woods in a smooth synthesis.*

*Because Vietnam and Ulster are
heaps on Auschwitz of the bones,
and the fresh rich trees
pins on mountains of pain.*

*Meanwhile, in another time and place, ex-
jaguar hunter Uncle X....*



This is Uncle X⁴, from the North Rupununi in Guyana. He is a community elder and an ex-jaguar hunter. He is also a poet, though he wouldn't claim such. The following stanzas come from Uncle X's explanation of Sustainable Utilisation Areas (SUAs) to the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB). SUAs are areas in the rainforest that have been demarcated for sustainable use by the indigenous communities, in contrast to Wilderness Preserves, in which no harvesting is allowed. Prior to Uncle X's performance, S., a professional development worker with Iwokrama, attempted to explain SUAs in terms of management systems and scientific generalisation. This is an extract from Uncle X's response and his own voicing of the community's maintenance of their environment:

Text 4 NRDDB meeting. 4/11/2000.



- 2 So you have (TAPE TURNS)...
- 3 ...(slender) lines,
- 4 so that you can observe...changes.
- 5 How things changes?
- 6 How do they form?
- 7 What happen within a year after, within a year, five year, a ten year, a fifteen year period?

.1.1 Prediction

- 8 So, you would get to understand the forest better
- 9 and those things would be left in their normal state.

.1.2 Reflection

- 10 Because there are other important issues which we,
- 11 because we live among them,
- 12 we live inside,
- 13 it's a way of life,
- 14 we take it for granted.
- 15 We are not (x),
- 16 many of us do not have sense of value,
- 17 don't know how valuable those things are to us,
- 18 and we just discard it, like many of us who pushing fire in the savannah -
- 19 you know how many innocent birds' lives you destroying
- 20 (probably, even though xx xxx)?
- 21 If a snake (xxxxxxx xxxxxx) inside your house?

.1.2.1 Action

- 22 So, don't blame the snakes
- 23 where you can't put fire in the savannah,

.1.2.1.1 Reflection

- 24 it's not good,
- 25 it's a very bad habit, like poisoning,
- 26 all these things are detrimental.
- 27 But because we never study it in depth,
- 28 we don't know how disastrous it is.

⁴ This is not Uncle Henry's real name.

Dell Hymes was aware of such everyday poetics, which he thought had been bleached from traditional narratives written down and committed to the page by folklorists.

From *Cultural poetics (ethnopoetics)* by Anthony K. Webster.

*As a method and theory
of analysis of verbal art,
much work in ethnopoetics
over the last several decades
has combined
what has often been called
a Hymesian approach
(based on the patterned use
of discourse particles)
with the approach used by Tedlock
(based on the prosody
and pause structuring
of actual performance).*

However, despite the performativity of Uncle X's talk, it is not the prosody and pause structuring that is, for me, its poetry, but something closer to MacLean's chronotopic merging of nature and community which MacInnes claimed was typical of the Gaels. Perhaps the maker of the Vimeo of Martyn Bennet's rendition of Sorley MacLean's *Hallaig* is closer to the truth when they suggest that such a chronotope is typical of all communities "on the edge."

For my own analysis of Uncle X's talk I used Carmel Cloran's (2010) *Rhetorical Units* to categorise different stretches of the text according to the spatial and temporal framing they make relevant through the lexicogrammar. This all connects nicely with Webster's (2015: 1-2) further discussion of ethnopoetics and takes us somewhere close to an appreciation of Uncle X's poetic voice:

*However,
ethnopoetics should be concerned
with more than simply poetic lines.
Ethnopoetics has been concerned
with individual creativity
and the careful attention
to linguistic details.*

*As Donald Bahr notes,
"ethnopoetics should be
more than the study of technique ...
it should include
meaning and use."*

*As Blommaert writes,
"ethnopoetic work is one way of addressing
the main issue in ethnography:
to describe
(and reconstruct) languages
not in the sense of stable,
closed
and internally homogeneous units
characterizing mankind ...
but as ordered complexes
of genres, styles, registers
and forms of use."*

Through his poetic voice Uncle X has reformulated S.'s abstractions into a local chronotope that, according to my analysis (Bartlett 2012: 208), made his message understandable to the local community in terms of empathy as well as comprehension. There is maybe a lesson here for those who blame a post-truth culture when they have failed to bring their message home to local communities.

Meanwhile, elsewhere on the Edge:



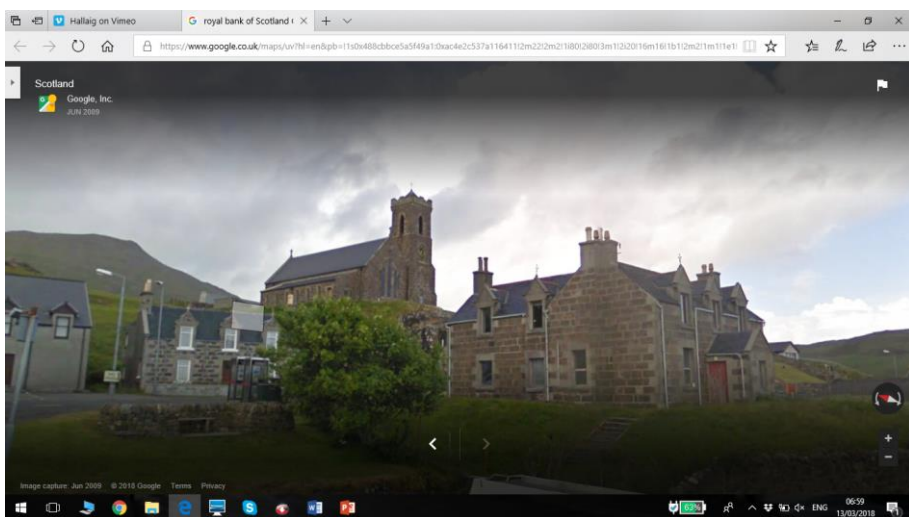
This is my grandfather and grandmother outside the doctor's house in Barra in the 1930s. My grandmother died shortly after I was born, so I always think of my grandfather first: he is part of my lived experience, my personal chronotope. As Singh and Bartlett (2017) put it:

Tom's grandmother, Mary Anne Stewart, was Glasgow Hebridean, her family being from the island of Grimsay, to the north of Barra, between Benbecula and North Uist in the Outer Hebridean archipelago. Mary Anne Stewart married Samuel Bartlett, a master mariner from Liverpool, who put himself through medical school and in 1926, when Tom's father Calum was six months old, took up the post of doctor in Benbecula, moving six years later to Barra. Tom's father spent his formative years in Barra until the family moved to the south of England at the end of the war, with Calum returning home to Barra every year from the mid-sixties, with his wife, Alice, and six children. Tom, who now lives in Glasgow and works in Cardiff, returns to the island several times a year and, as is the tradition on an island well-versed in both genealogy and out-migration, is asked each time "when did you come home?". As such Tom is very much on the periphery of Barra life, as is evident through the identity work performed in the interviews and in which Barra is the centre to which he scales his talk.

The picture below 'is' Kisimul Castle, a material artefact that stands as an icon for the Isle of Barra not just as spatial meronym but as an imagined community. The photo was taken by my Dad in the 1930s from the doctor's house that stands at the top of 'the Street' in Castlebay:



This is the house now:⁵



Ironically, the window from which my father would have seen the west is nailed and boarded, as in MacLean's *Hallaig*.

⁵ This photo was captured by Google in 2009: *Ceci n'est pas maintenant*.

No one lives in the house these days as the surgery and doctor have been relocated and the National Health Service will not sell the house below a value that has been determined by some internal (to what?) accounting system.

To the people on Barra it is an essential element of the Street, which has its own importance in the island's sociocultural and economic system. But systems are sometimes incommensurate.

The Street

Across the road from the doctor's house is the Castlebay branch of the Royal Bank of Scotland, which is currently in the news because it is one of the local branches facing closure as internet banking becomes the option of no-choice for more and more customers.⁶



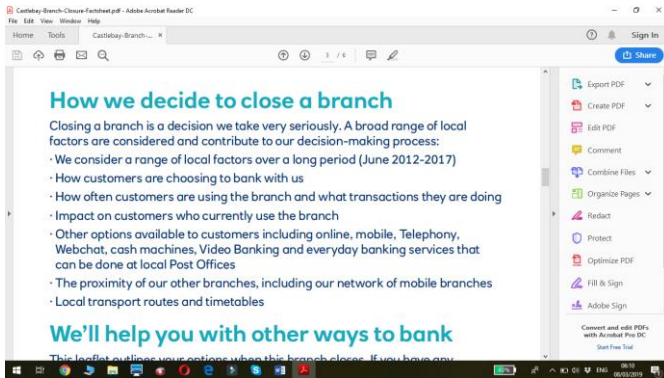
Here is a Facebook reaction to the closure of the bank from a Barra man who is known to me but will not be known to you:

Another empty building on the Street.

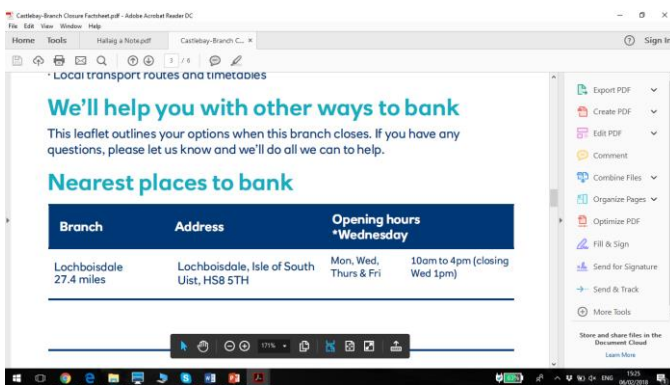
Here we see, encapsulated in a single nominal group, a concern for the local sociocultural ecosystem and the place of the Bank within it.

The following is the statement from the Royal Bank of Scotland:

⁶ At the time of revising this paper the RBS in Castlebay is one of only two branches reprieved out of 62 threatened with closure and I hear rumours that the doctor's house has at last been sold. However, revealing this information would spoil my story.



Here, in contrast to the Facebook post, the bank is situated, not unreasonably but possibly incommensurably, within a network of socioeconomic practices and meanings centring round the business of the bank itself, either as an isolate or, as shown in the next notice, within the system of banking facilities:



Beyond the reference to different systems of meaning, this notice further betrays a conception of space not shared by the islanders, as this 27.4 miles places the nearest branch on a different island, so necessitating the scheduling of a 50-minute ferry trip each way for any would-be customers.

In contrast with the discourse of the bank as an institution, for my Facebook friend and other islanders, the bank is more than a space: it is a *place* with a chronotopic identity (Scollon and Scollon 2003). This is even marked by the bank themselves, with a bilingual plaque by the door, commemorating the filming of *Whisky Galore* on Barra:⁷

⁷ Thanks to my friend Eòin Aonghais Ruairaidh Neill, aka Eòin Mòrag Eòin Dhòmhnail Iain, né Jonathan MacNeil, also known as Jukebox Johnny, for the photograph.



In the novel *Whisky Galore*, Compton Mackenzie parodies my grandfather (who you saw above) as the priggish Captain Waggett.

And when I was a child the bank was cleaned daily by Morag MacAulay, known as Mòr Bhàn (Fair Marion), who lived just along from the doctor's house. She was the RBS's longest-serving employee, though she was not honoured with a plaque. She was honoured in a different way, though. Many years ago, a young man came over the water from Uist (where the closest RBS will be...) and fell in love with Mòr Bhàn. She agreed to see him again but, as the tale goes, he ended up back in Uist on a spree and so their relationship was brought to a premature end. It did produce the following song, however, *Gruagach Og an Fhuil Bhàn*, or the *Fair Maid of Barra*, composed for Mòr Bhàn by her errant suitor. It was the tune played on the pipes at my father's funeral four years ago by his friend Arche MacIntyre, and here it is now [Tom picks up a tin whistle and plays the following tune <https://vimeo.com/324294800>]:

The Fair Maid of Barra

Slow Air

by John Campbell, Barra



Places are saturated with meanings, made across many different modes: visual, spatial and musical as well as oral and memorial.

But a cultural system is more than nostalgia and it is as material as it is semiotic. The following sketch of recent Barra history is reproduced from Singh and Bartlett (2017:51):

...Barra was a major herring port until the middle of the last century. Income from the sea, through fishing or service in the Merchant and Royal Navy, was necessary to supplement the largely subsistence economy of crofting (small-scale agriculture and sheep and cattle farming), which has always been precarious on the island's thin and rocky soil. The combination of these industries guaranteed relative self-sufficiency for the island community; but their decline over the last half-century resulted in a second period of out-migration and depopulation. Although the population is now relatively stable at around the 1200 mark, the demographic make-up within the island is shifting as the traditional cycle of in- and out-migration, whereby a large number of young islanders seek work at sea or on the mainland before returning with families, appears to be changing momentum (Euan Scott, Barra and Vatersay Community Council, *pers. comm.*).

In other words, Barra has until recently had a metastable social ecology. Teenagers would leave Barra for the thrill of the mainland and/or to continue their education but, when they had family of their own, they would return home to provide their kids with a safe upbringing. These kids would then in turn become teenagers, and so the population remained dynamic but relatively stable for a number of years.

Recently, however, children have started leaving the island earlier to get a mainland education and there is a fear they will no longer be *Barraich* (or Barra folk) when they get older, and so will not get the urge to come home. And as more buildings become empty on the Street, it becomes harder to recruit teachers to the island to maintain the level of education that will keep children on the island for longer...

The doctor's house and the bank are icons, not of the imagined community that Kisimul Castle evokes, but of the decay of this system and the failure of external bodies to comprehend and to empathise and to assimilate their systems to those of the islanders. External bodies for whom the many interconnecting elements of the semiotic landscape are not seen as articulating moments within a local ecosystem, a local chronotope, but are evaluated within alternative chronotopes within incommensurable discourses operating at different scales (Bartlett *in press*).

Reminiscences

When I was younger the Street was buzzing.

I was brought up in the South of England, five hundred miles and two full days' travel from Barra. One day in the late sixties or early seventies the big television that served my whole primary school was wheeled in so we could watch *Finding Out*. And to my great joy, the programme started with a shot of the iconic Street! Imagine not only my excitement at seeing the Street, but also the cultural capital I could sense myself accruing when the teacher asked "Tom, you go to Scotland, don't you?". "I do," I replied, "and I go to Barra – and that was my Mum walking down the Street!" Instant legitimisation! For indeed, there was my Mum, walking down the Street, just down from the doctor's house.

Those of you brought up in another chronotope can maybe not quite catch the wonder of this event for a young boy nearly fifty years ago.

That episode of *Finding Out* had in fact begun with another Barra icon: the Tràigh Mhór, the cocklestrand runway where arrivals are dependent on tides.



My grandfather – who lived in the doctor’s house and who was lampooned by Compton Mackenzie in *Whisky Galore*, the film commemorated on the plaque on the bank – was responsible for the first commercial plane that landed here. And here’s my father, my Uncle Gregor and my Auntie Catriona guarding that plane as the pilot was whisked away for lunch in Castlebay:



Fragile ecologies again

The Tràigh Mhór was recently declared part of a Marine Special Area of Conservation (mSAC) by Scottish National Heritage, “the Scottish public body responsible for the country’s natural

heritage, especially its natural, genetic and scenic diversity” (Wikipedia entry for Scottish National Heritage, my translation). Here is SNH’s description of mSACS:

mSACS

Whether looking at your local coastline or the undersea cliffs around St Kilda you will discover a range of spectacular examples of marine biodiversity in Scottish waters. A number of our best examples of species and habitats have been selected for protection as a type of **Marine Protected Area** (MPA) known as marine Special Areas of Conservation (mSACS). SACs are designated under the European **Habitats Directive**, which is transposed in to Scottish law through the **Habitats Regulations**. SACs form part of the European network of **Natura sites**.

A Special Area of Conservation (SAC) protects one or more special habitats and/or species – terrestrial or **marine** – listed in the **Habitats Directive**.

Scotland has 239 designated SACs, including three that straddle the border with England. There are also four SACs in Scotland’s offshore waters. Together they cover more than 1.17 million hectares (4,500 square miles) of land and inshore waters in Scotland and Scottish offshore waters.

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/protected-areas/international-designations/sac/marine-sacs/>

Note the generic and chronotopic similarity with the Royal Bank’s statement in the way the areas are described in their own terms and in relation to other mSACS, with no reference to the socioeconomic systems of the areas in which they play a vital function. The “protected” status of these areas has not been met with universal approval, however, and a local pressure group, SHAMED, was set up to oppose the designation. The following report is from *FISHupdate* online, whose readership is likely to be more favourably inclined towards a Chairman speaking “from his prawn boat in the south Minch” than “the government and their promises and assurances” which are “under European control”:

CAMPAIGNERS in the Outer Hebrides have reacted with dismay after the Scottish Government announced the designation of the Sound of Barra as a marine Special Area of Conservation (mSAC).

The ruling by environment minister Paul Wheelhouse means the sea and sandbanks between Barra and South Uist will go forward to the European Commission for inclusion in plans for an EU-wide network of SACs.

The move follows a recommendation for designation from Scottish Natural Heritage last November – despite local concerns about restrictions on traditional livelihoods such as fishing and lack of accountability.

Action group Southern Hebrides Against Marine Environmental Designations (SHAMED), doubted whether eco-tourism would compensate for reduced fishing revenues.

Chairman Angus MacLeod said from his prawn boat in the south Minch: ‘We have lost all faith in the government and their promises and assurances.’

‘The minister has stated it will be of benefit to tourism – but Barra already has a very good tourism industry as it is.’

‘The government’s own report has recognised that designation will hit the economy to the value of £1 million per annum.’

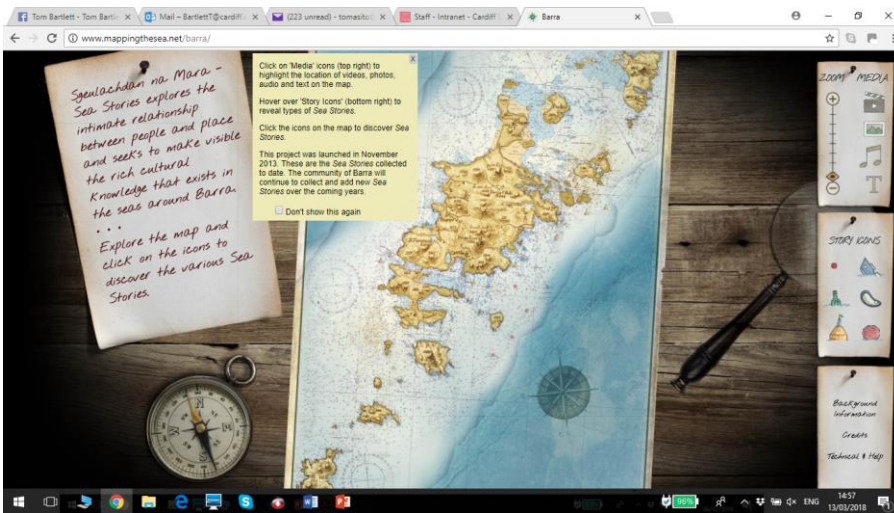
‘There is no way tourism will make up that kind of balance and even if it did Barra does not have the infrastructure to deal with that.’

He added: ‘We have always said if the government was serious about local management for a marine designated area they should start with Mingulay reef [already an SAC] before progressing with any decision on the Sound of Barra.’

‘Now the minister has rubber stamped the designation it is under European control – and I can’t see how any local management plan will work.’

<https://www.fishupdate.com/dismay-at-barra-conservation-outcome-fishupdate-com/SHAMED>

For Angus, as for many fishermen, these seas constitute a local ecosystem, linked first and foremost to the fragile social ecology of the islands, to local jobs on Barra and to the maintenance of the island way of life. And behind Angus’s words there is a feeling that he does not wish to see the community reduced to living off tourism, even if the infrastructure did exist. Closer to Angus’s understanding would be *Sgeulachdan na Mara* (*Sea Stories*; <http://www.mappingthesea.net/barra/>), a project that maps the seas around Barra not only as physical environments but as they are integrated into the culture of the island through the narratives of the Barra folk themselves – the local seas as a chronotope restricted in space but deep in time (cf. Singh and Bartlett 2017: 54).



In the closing sentences of the SHAMED article, Angus mentions the local management plan. But Angus sees no hope for it, implying that management of the community at the local scale will inevitably run foul of higher scale discourses marching to different chronotopes, with their centring institutions (Blommaert 2005: 75) in Brussels, in which the seas around Barra are not construed as ecosystems in their own rights, connected to the local economy, but as elements in a larger marine system. Different chronotopes and incommensurable discourses again, semiosis and materiality working together to produce different ecologies of meaning...

In football and entertainment news

My friend Martin hand dives for clams⁸ in the area designated an mSAC. When I was seven, he lived in the house just up from the house my father had renovated on the East Side of the island. He and his brothers came down to play us at football, into the night, ten or more of us on an inconceivably narrow strip of land:



He later told me they were driven by a motivation to teach the English tourists a thing or two. Martin is now the manager of Barra FC who won the Uist and Barra league for the first time in 47 years in 2015. This is one of the ways in which Barra celebrated:



The statue is St Barr (aka St Finbar), the monk who brought Christianity to Barra in the sixth century. The Barra FC shirt is a later addition. As far as I am aware, everyone on Barra enjoyed this mischievous syncretism and the deep and narrow chronotope it represents. I took Finbar as my confirmation name and it is my son's second name. The statue of St Barr stands in the bay at Northbay, by St Barr's Church. And it was in Northbay Church Hall that I went with my Dad to see Martyn Bennett, who I knew from Sandy Bell's, the same bar where I knew John MacInnes and where I met Mary, my wife.

⁸ Scallops are clams in Barra.

Reel time

It was Martyn Bennet who set MacLean reciting *Hallaig*, in Gaelic and English, to his own fusion of dub sounds and traditional music (which I hope you heard via the Vimeo link above). Translations of translations in the textual trajectory of the poem. Such syncretism can be very effective under the right circumstances. As I was writing this paper, an orchestral version of *Bothy Culture*, the album on which *Hallaig* appears, was performed at the SSE Hydro in Glasgow (capacity 13,000) and recorded for the BBC (capacity limitless).



In this syncretic form, the poem reaches out to audiences from a new generation and on a new scale while still maintaining the integrity of the poet's voice. As one review of the gig commented:

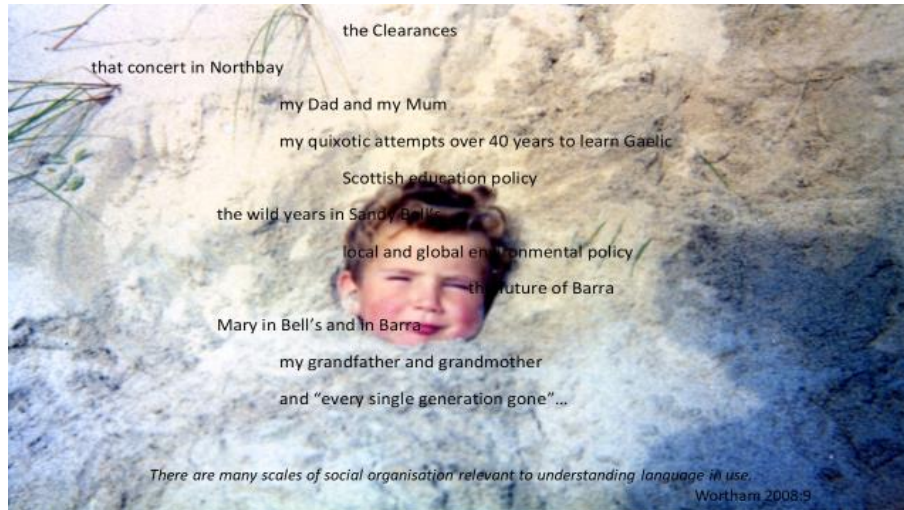
The spoken word was an important aspect of Martyn's music, and on *Bothy Culture* he turned to Scotland's greatest Gaelic poet, **Sorley MacLean** for inspiration – in *Hallaig*. Amidst the sound of ethereal percussion, **Catriona MacKay**'s harp and a soft bird-call of low-whistle, actor **David Hayman** read MacLean's English translation of *Hallaig*. There was a hush around the venue for the closing whistle melody, and the recording of MacLean's own Gaelic reading of the poem (from Timothy Neat's excellent film, *Hallaig*). It's amazing to think that this was probably the only sound not produced live on the night.

<http://www.folkradio.co.uk/2018/01/celtic-connections-the-grit-orchestra-bothy-culture-and-beyond-live-review/>



For the purposes of the present paper, this is the endpoint on the textual trajectory (Kell 2013) of Sorley MacLean’s *Hallaig*, though it is only a single trajectory out of many.

For me personally, the moment of enunciation, entextualised in the still image above, represented a deep and powerful *layered simultaneity* (Blommaert 2005: 130-131) of meanings, with “multiple timescales and multiple contexts coalesc[ing] around [the] instance of interaction” (Bartlett 2017: 388). These contexts were all operating at various scales, but were all made relevant by that moment, all operating in the real time of the deictic centre:



Discussion

According to Martyn Bennett's website, his album *Bothy Culture* "developed as a result of time spent in the rave and house scenes of '90s Glasgow and toying with forms of world music. Martyn draws from Punjabi, Turkish, Scandinavian and Irish cultures as well as the rave/techno/hip-hop subcultures to create this assiduous hybrid" (http://www.martynbennett.com/Album_BothyCulture-20-Years.html).⁹ Nonetheless, the music that brings the whole glorious clamjamfry to an end is a piobaireachd, *Cumha Eachainn Ruaidh nan Cath* (Lament for Red Hector of the Battles). Piobaireachd is the high culture of Scottish music, the music of the great Highland bagpipe reduced to a minimalist purity, the mark of a true musician. In the Hydro, the effect of this stripping down to ancient roots produced an almost atavistic response. As reported:

In amongst all the spectacle, and despite the flashing lights of the international stage, perhaps the most moving moment of the night was when lone piper Findlay MacDonald silenced the audience with 'Cumha Eachainn Ruaidh nan Cath/Lament for Red Hector of the Battles.' It was just one of those moments. Ethnologists might call this *communitas*. You just know it when you feel it. It is 'the sense of sharing felt by a group when their life together takes on deep meaning and collective awareness,' 'a moment in and out of time,' 'the experience of in-betweenness,' 'the gift of togetherness.' There is something magical about it. [i]

[i] Turner, E. *Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy*. 2005

<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/02/02/bothy-culture-and-beyond-a-live-lasting-culture/>

Similarly, at that concert in Northbay Hall, with me and my Dad, after an opening set in which he and his band shocked us with fusions never before witnessed on the island, Martyn ended up with set of solo piping culminating in a piobaireachd.

Why?

At first I thought of it as an act of self-legitimation, an index to the knowing Barra audience that, behind all the techno-clatter, here was the real music and here was a real piper. But that would equate to a kind of ethnopurism, a claim that, when all is said and done, it is the native voice that is truest and best. My feeling now is that, paradoxically, it is the very hybridity¹⁰ of Martyn's work that is justified by his mastery of the pure ancient form. Sorley MacLean saw the war-ravaged terrain of Europe in the mountains of his native Skye; Bennet provides the necessary antithesis to this:

As globalisation is set to expand, I feel it is time for us to face our own reflection in the great mirror of our cultures.

Martyn Bennet (quoted in the sleeve notes to the posthumous compilation CD *Aye*)

Not seeing ourselves as others see us, as another great Scottish iconoclast put it, but seeing ourselves in the other, translating our natural voice, not only so we can be better understood but so we can better understand ourselves. Maintaining our true and legitimate voice while testing it in hybrid forms. This is the poetics of Sorley MacLean and Uncle X as well as of Martyn Bennett.

⁹ Editor's comment: There are a few similar musicians from this time, diaspora putting out a similar style: Apache Indian, Asian Dub Foundation, Fun-Da-Mental, The Kaliphz.

¹⁰ Singh, this volume, drawing on Nakassis (2018), prefers to call this ambivalence.

Introspection

This paper-that-has-been-and-will-be-a-talk has been an experiment, an attempt to illustrate the concept I am discussing, a hybrid form that mixes the acutely personal with the technical and general; that crosses space and time to make general points in localised ways; that questions entextualisation, authorship and authority; and that probes the constraints and affordances of different modes of communication and the way these shape our narratives. Beyond that, I have tried to show how places are saturated with meaning at the local level (even for someone on the fringes), and how these meanings multiply and intersect in multiple ways not imagined by the cold logic of Fred the Shred, as a former CEO of the RBS became not-so-affectionately known. But also, it was a means of establishing my credentials as a legitimate speaker with a legitimate voice. For MacLean's invocation of Tarmod and Eachainn Mór, read my father, my grandparents, Martin my clam-diving friend and Martyn Bennet the musician.

In the spirit of ethnography, I have to ask: Has it worked, or was it just an ego trip with no relevance beyond my own deictic centre and my imagined self? Did it make my voice legitimate or did I look like I had my head up my arse? Well, that is just the point, and just the issue faced in community dealings with the system. How much of themselves do they reveal when a researcher casually asks, "Your chronotope or mine?" How do they reconcile the intensive lived chronotope of their communities with the extensive and decontextualised chronotope of the gatekeepers? How do they maintain a legitimate voice as they transcend the chronotopes they naturally inhabit? Where do the personal, the communal and the trans-societal meet?

And how can we as applied linguists put *ourselves* out there and contribute to resolving the seemingly incommensurate across discourses? As Bartlett rightly states, above:

...if the negotiation of the context of situation includes a negotiation of experience and expectation, of competing semiotic histories and imagined futures, then what is semiotically real are the parameters, or dimensions, of time and space *made relevant* by the speakers themselves through, and for the purposes of, their talk.

The doctor's house, the Castlebay branch of the Royal Bank of Scotland, the waters off Barra, the clachan of Hallaig and the rainforest resources in the Rupununi are relevant to different people in different ways. They are elements in multiple simultaneous systems of signification operating at different scales and orienting towards different centring institutions. Within the discourses at each scale, these individual elements gain different *valeurs*, different values, as they are articulated as moments – that is to say, made relevant – within that system. The trajectories of texts and their successes along the way are interwoven with the chronotopic identities of the receivers as much as the producers. There is a need, then, not for direct confrontation between discourse systems, but for an understanding – comprehension and empathy – across these discourses, so that decision-makers in each centre see themselves in the great mirror of other's cultures and orient their own values to the chronotopic understandings of others.

As applied linguists we can contribute to this effort in tracing the trajectories of texts and intervening to make them relevant to others. This is not a one-off event but an exercise in polyphony. Discourses are made from complex webs of interaction operating in different ways and before different audiences. Sometimes there will be a need for revoicing or rescaling, recreating the discourse of others in locally understandable ways; sometimes there will be a need to fuse these different voices in hybrid forms that cross discursive boundaries; and sometimes there will be a need to return to the pure voice, not to value it above all others, but to legitimate its hybridisation.

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